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AMONG THE DUNKERS

By Nelson Lloyd

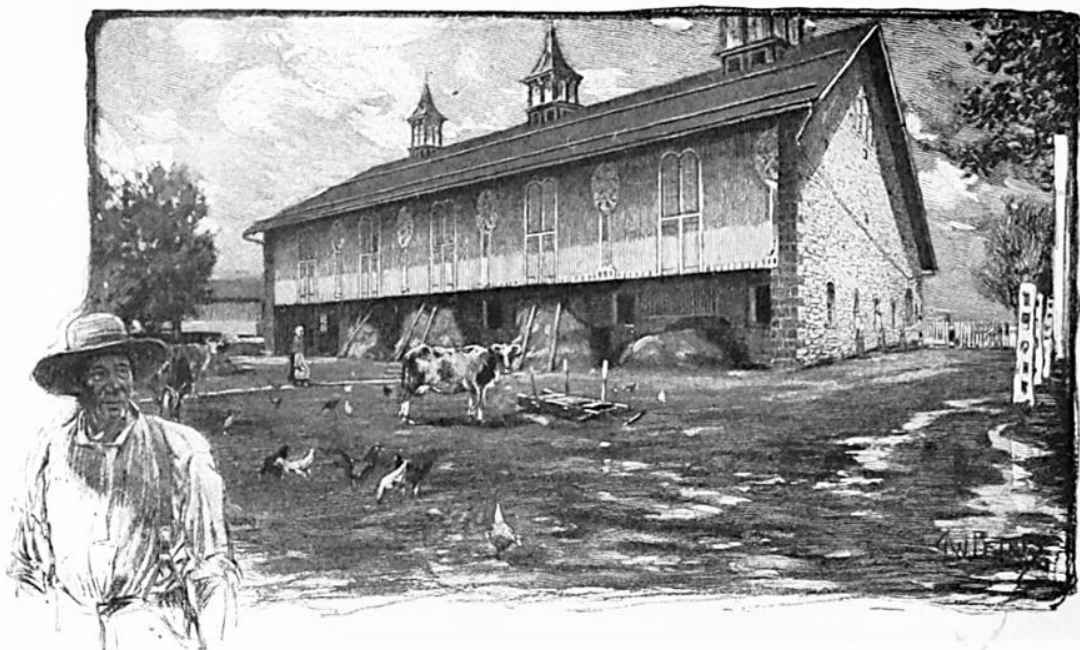
ILLUSTRATIONS BY G. W. PETERS

THE sun is free of the ridges. It has shaken off the lone pine that stands out so boldly there in the clearing, and is soaring off over the mountains to the south. It is time for preaching. The clock would point the hour of eight, and the churchman of the town would hardly yet be considering his breakfast, but here in our little Pennsylvania valley we know that when the sun has cleared that solemn old tree it is time to be hitching, for five dusty miles lie between us and the Dunker meeting-house. The road is a hard one, too. From where it leaves the pike at the covered bridge to where it skirts the berry-patch at the crest of the hill, we can see every foot of it standing out white and hot against the green slope. There are three more climbs like that before we reach our journey's end, but why count the cost when we are to hear a young brother from "Ioway"; and these brethren from a distance are always better talkers than our home product. The mere fact that they have travelled from "Ioway" shows that they have seen the world and will have something new to tell us.

But all the valley is not going to Dunker preaching. The little brick meeting-house over the ridge would not hold one-half the pious folk that are to journey along that road to-day. Many will pass it and go on to the grove where the great Mennonite bush-meeting is on; or to the barn where the River Brethren gather for their simple service of devotion, or to the

white farm-house with the gates of blue. Within those blue gates the Amish are to worship, and, if their ancient custom had its inception in truth, one could not choose a better place, for it has been hallowed by the visit of many a passing angel, who, marking the heavenly hue of the entrance, has stepped inside to bless the home there.

So the valley is awake to its Sabbath duties. From its every quarter, along its every road, the rockaways are crawling. They meet at the covered bridge; they move solemnly up the long hill; and our church parade is on. How different it is from that famous one that swings along Fifth Avenue every Sunday, when the human pea-fowl of every class strut and spread their plumage! Here simplicity is the effect to be obtained, for the keynote of the teaching of these sombre folk is humility. There, for instance, is the Dunker bishop of the district. He drives a fat horse with a monstrous curly mane, and the good animal ambles along as though really anxious to make time, but fears to be seen running on Sunday. The brother sits well back in his vehicle, and is almost hidden from view by the dust-coated side-curtains, but still we can see his great black hat, with its high, cylindrical crown and broad, flat brim. It looks hot these summer days, but it is well in keeping with his heavy brown coat, which has a straight, clerical collar, close buttoned at the throat, is cut away well in front, and sweeps into broad tails behind. The bishop's hair is



A Dunker Barn where Meetings are Held.

long, and is trimmed off straight, just below the ears, which causes it to stick out in most inartistic fashion. His beard is long, too, and his upper lip is clean shaven, for among his people a mustache is a badge of worldliness.

Beside him is his wife. They have fine faces, the women of these simple sects, and the austere scoop-bonnet and the kerchief at the neck almost seem a fitting frame for the placid countenance of the bishop's helpmate. Her dress, too, is plain in color and cut, and is unornamented by frills or furbelows.

As it is with the bishop and his companion, so it is with every man and woman in the long line of vehicles bound over the ridges. You have seen them, and, unless you know their faces, you have seen all the brethren and sisters in the solemn procession. Yet there are differences. To the stranger in our valley these differences are so small as to pass unnoticed, but to them so big as to divide them at the Dunker meeting-house, to halt some there, to send some on to the farm with the blue gates, some to the gathering in the grove and others to the barn service.

To the Amishman, sitting in his shirt-sleeves, jogging the reins up and down over the back of his sleek horse, the Dunker is a worldly man, for the Dunker wears buttons, and the button is an emblem of vanity. Truly pious folk use hooks and eyes, as he does himself. Just why the

button should be so wicked a thing the Amishman would doubtless find it hard to explain. He simply knows that his people have for generations eschewed them as worldly. His knowledge of history does not extend back to the sixteenth century when the great Baptist movement was in its inception in Germany. Then it was the custom in many parts of the Fatherland for the young bloods to decorate their coats and waistcoats with row on row of bright metal buttons. To his forefathers these were outward manifestations of Satan, and in their protest they took to the hook and eye.

The Dunker has a dash-board on his wagon and a little hood in front to better protect him in the driving rain. The Amishman does not. He abhors dashboards and hoods. The lines of his vehicle are as straight and severe as those of his buttonless coat and his great wide trousers, cut in the fashion of a hundred years ago. But with all his studied simplicity, there seems unconscious art in the arrangement of his hair. It is smoothed over the forehead in a bang, brushed down the side of the head until the ear is almost covered, and chopped straight across behind, and the neck below it is kept well shaved.

There are differences then. As it is with this one man, so through the whole line. The shade of a gown or bonnet, the arrangement of the hair or beard, the button

on the coat, the dashboard on the wagon will tell the Dunker from the Amishman, the River Brother from the Mennonite.

It would seem that these folk are divided more by such small outward manifestations than by the great questions of faith. Still, between the Mennonite and the Dunker there is the one serious difference on the rite of baptism. To the latter three-fold immersion is all-important, while to the former it is sufficient to kneel in the stream and receive the water on the head from the hand of the elder, though in many congregations simple affusion is enough. On all other points they seem almost in accord. Both strive faithfully to follow the letter of the Scripture, to keep apart from the world and to be simple in their mode of living. The strange ceremony of the pedilavium is common to both, and for centuries they have stood together in opposition to infant baptism, to the taking of oaths, and the bearing of arms. Both use the courts to settle their disputes only as a last resort, but endeavor to follow the injunction: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Matthew xviii. 15-17.)

So we seldom find them in a court of law, and almost as infrequently at the polls, though of late years the progressive spirit of the age has stirred them in many

parts to exercise more and more the right of franchise.

The history of the Dunkers and the Mennonites shows a continual combating of this same progressive spirit. Nearly all of the quaint German sects in our middle and southern Pennsylvania counties can be traced to either one or the other of these denominations, and in every instance the schism has come on some question of church discipline, such as the introduction of the Sunday-school, the use of the meeting-house, or the enforcement of rules regarding dress. Such a revolt from the Mennonites two centuries ago, headed by Jacob Ammen, led to the formation of the Amish denomination. And strict as they were, they, too, suffered a rupture, and to-day we have the Old Amish, who scorn the meeting-house, but gather for worship in their homes. With the Dunkers, also, we find several divisions brought about by disputes over the principles of dress, the question of non-conformity with



A Dunker Sister.

the world, and the introduction of Sunday-schools. Even the small body of River Brethren has split in three. This denomination is supposed to have sprung from the Mennonites, whom they much resemble in belief and practice, though they hold to three-fold immersion. They were first known as one organization in the middle of the eighteenth century, when they began to baptize in the Susquehanna.

Of all the Protestant churches few have so ancient a history as the Mennonites. None, not even the Quakers, can point to a record of so much evil borne and so little returned. Their origin is surrounded with obscurity. They were reproached by some inimical historians of the sixteenth

century with being an outgrowth of those fanatical Anabaptists who seized the city of Münster and made John of Leyden king. Their own scholars contend that they descended from the Waldenses, who struggled so long against Rome before the Protestant movement became general. The best modern authorities say that the truth lies between these two theories. The Baptist movement in Germany, in the early part of the sixteenth century, embraced many Waldensian communities. John of Leyden and his compatriots stood at one extreme of the movement, and at the other were Dirck Philips and Menno Simons, who gave his name to the sect now known as the Mennonites or Mennists. These leaders had but one point in common, and that was opposition to infant baptism.

Menno Simons was born in Friesland in 1492. He entered the Roman priesthood, but became a close student of the teachings of Luther and Zwinglius, and eventually an ardent opponent of infant baptism. He left the Roman Church in 1536, and gathered around him a small company of persons who held views like his. Under his leadership this sect grew rapidly in numbers and influence. To that influence can be readily traced the great Baptist movement in England, and from the teachings of Menno Simons, Barclay says, George Fox imbibed the views that brought him to the front among the religious leaders of history. The Mennonites have been frequently spoken of as German Quakers. It were more just to speak of the Quakers as English Mennonites.

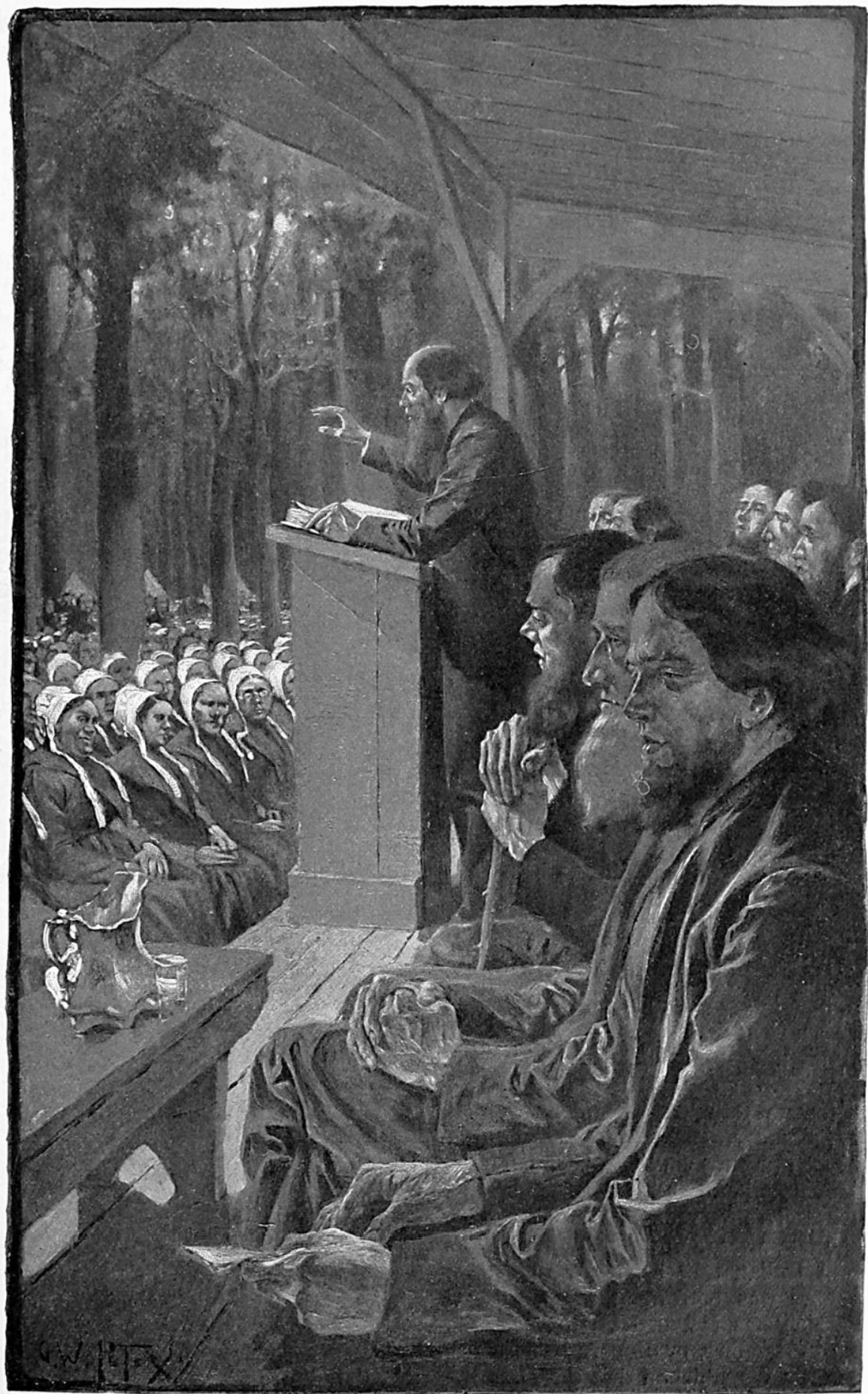
No Christian sect was ever more bitterly persecuted than these simple, harmless people. Their story, from the days of Menno Simons until they found refuge in Pennsylvania, is one of continued oppression.

In their Confession of Faith, adopted at Dordrecht in 1632, they set forth their doctrine of non-resistance. "Regarding revenge, whereby we resist our enemies with the sword," they declare, "we believe and confess that the Lord Jesus has forbidden his disciples and followers all revenge and resistance, and has thereby commanded them not 'to return evil for evil, nor railing for railing,' but to put 'the sword into the sheath'; or, as the prophets foretold, 'beat them into ploughshares.'"

At a time when men argued theology with the sword and Germany was being fought over by the armies of Europe, there could be little place for a people who lived up to such a principle. Particularly was this true in the Palatinate, which through the whole of the seventeenth century was a scene of ruthless ravage and rapine. Even in free Switzerland the doctrines of the Mennonites, and that of non-resistance especially, clashed with the State church, and those who held them suffered much at the hands of their Reformed brethren. So, when Penn opened his great domain in the New World to the oppressed of all lands, the followers of Menno Simons began to move across the sea. The first party of thirteen families went from Crefeld, a city on the lower Rhine, in 1683, and arrived in Philadelphia on October 6th of that year. They founded Germantown and started the great German immigration to Pennsylvania.

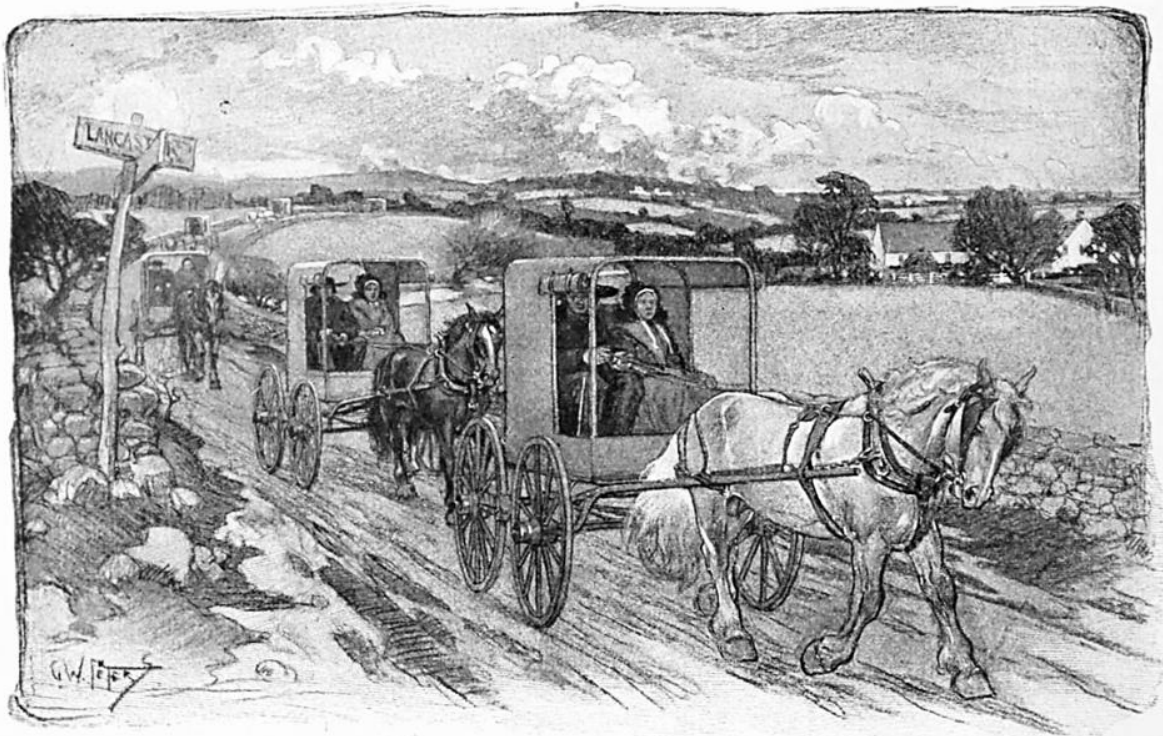
The movement which resulted in the formation of the large sect now known as the German Baptist Brethren, as the Dunkers are properly called, was independent of the Mennonites. The house of Alexander Mack in Schwarzenau, Germany, was the scene of the first gathering of these people. Here, in 1708, a little company of eight persons began to meet together at regular times to study the New Testament. They were convinced that its injunctions were not being consistently obeyed by either the Lutheran or Reformed churches, and they aimed to study it impartially, casting aside all prejudice and tradition, and to judge for themselves the duty it imposed on the believer. It was not long until they deemed that they saw that duty clearly, and the initial step to its proper performance was baptism by immersion.

"And now as they were prepared thereunto, so they went into the solitude in the morning," reads the old record by Brother Theophilus, of the monastery at Ephrata. "Even eight of them went out unto the water called *Æder* [The Eder]. And the brother upon whom fell the lot baptized the brother whom the congregation of Christ wanted baptized, and after he was baptized he immersed him who had baptized him and the remaining three brothers and sisters. And so all eight were baptized.



Drawn by G. W. Peters.

An Amish Camp Meeting.



Along its every road, the rockaways are crawling.

in the early morning hour. This was accomplished in the year 1708. But of the month of the year, or the day of the month or the week they have left no account."

Alexander Mack became the minister of the church. Its membership increased rapidly, but persecution followed and eventually drove the brethren to Crefeld. In 1719 the first party of these refugees, numbering nineteen families, reached Germantown. They were soon scattered, and it was not until some years later that they united again for religious worship. Peter Becker, a weaver of Germantown, was the moving spirit among them, and on Christmas-day, in 1723, he gathered together the brethren and formed the first congregation in this country. There were present the seventeen persons who had been baptized in the Fatherland, and six others presented themselves for reception into the fold. In the late afternoon the party went over an old Indian trail to the Wissahickon, and here was performed the baptismal rite which has fastened on the sect the name of Dunker, or dipper. There was ice on the Wissahickon that day, but the pious Becker, leading by the hand one Martin Urner, an Alsatian, stepped into the creek undaunted. From the little company kneeling on the bank arose the

solemn baptismal hymn of Alexander Mack, *Ueberschlag die Kost, Spricht Jesu Christ, waun du den Grund wilt Legen*. Before the elder, standing waist-deep in the water, the Alsatian knelt and was thrice immersed beneath the stream. The *Segenspruch* was pronounced and he stepped forth into the company of his spiritual brethren. It was nearly dark before the last rite had been performed and the little band left the wild, wooded ravine. That night, in the house of one of the congregation, they held a love-feast.

It is nearly 200 years since Becker and his people held their night service in the hut of Johannes Gumre, but time has wrought few changes in that quaint ceremonial. The brethren of to-day commemorate the Last Supper with the same peculiar forms. In that good time between the planting and the hay-making, when Nature is doing most of the farm-work, and again when the barns are stuffed with the fruits of the year's labor, the rockaways come out by the scores to liven the roads to the meeting-place. And who that has seen the rite can forget it? Go to our quiet valleys and follow these pious folk, sit with the bearded brethren as they drone out their German hymns, watch the flickering candle-light as it plays

over the faces of the white-capped sisters at the evening service, and they will carry you centuries into the past ; they will lift you out of a complex world into such a simple one.

It was the writer's privilege to follow the rockaways one day last May to a barn in the Lebanon Valley, one of those great white structures with green shutters, that so distinctly mark our Pennsylvania landscapes. The brethren came early. By noon a hundred vehicles stood side by side in the field close by, and as many horses were hitched along the fences or around the wagons filled with feed that had been provided for them, for beast as well as man was cared for here. Dinner was served to all in the long tent in the orchard. None was refused. For friend or stranger, for those of the fold or the unregenerate a bountiful meal was spread. The men at one table and the women

at another faced great plates or green pickles, loaves of bread of monstrous size, bowls of apple-butter, rich, black, and pasty, as only it is to be found on the Pennsylvania farm ; pans of beef-stew and rice, and generous rusk. Between the tables moved a score of sisters and long-bearded brethren with cheeks that glowed from sobriety and much scrubbing. They lugged about large pots of coffee and milk and saw that the wants of all were satisfied. Not till the wreckage had been cleared away and the last tin pail was shining like silver did the movement toward the barn begin. Here benches were fixed facing the platform that had been erected across the front of the floor for the ministers, who numbered more than ten. There were about 200 in the

company, which was divided, as it is at all their services, the women sitting on one hand and the men on the other.

An old brother started the singing by shouting the first line of a hymn, and the whole company joined in. A half-dozen hymns followed quickly, some in the Pennsylvania German, some in English, some

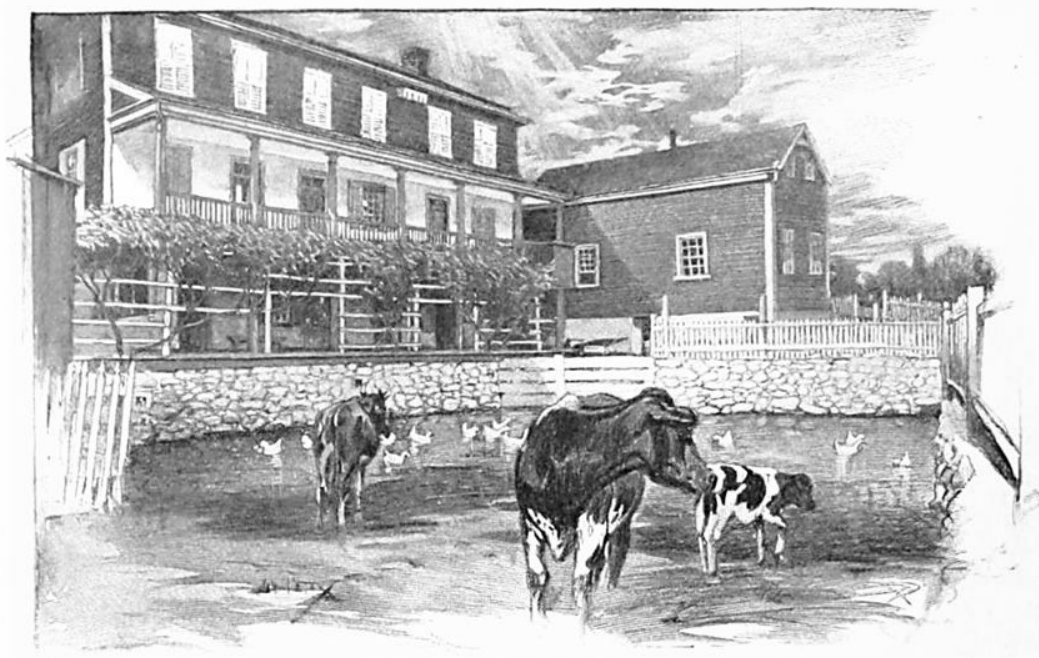
mere fragments droned out line by line after a preacher had repeated them. A half-hour was passed thus, and then began an "experience meeting." Here a brother or there a sister would arise and in a few words offer "testimony." Now and then there came a lull, but it would be but momentary, for some brother was ever ready to roll out a warning "Ho-oh-oh," and under his lead the whole company would swing away into a song again. The sermons were next, and once the preaching began it seemed to the onlooker interminable, for minister af-



An Amish Girl.

ter minister arose, and some in Pennsylvania German and some in English expounded their simple doctrines. The big supper-bells were sounding all over the valley before the last man had finished.

Those discourses were certainly not masterpieces. One or two of the elders, powerful old men with splendid voices, did ascend to eloquence and made the rafters ring with their rolling, guttural periods, but for most the speech was halting and the ideas expressed were few and oft repeated. Absolute faith in the letter of the Scriptures was the keynote, for into these minds the question of their inspiration had never entered. But the people were no more learned than their leaders. Through that long afternoon they listened



An Amish Farm House.

with rapt attention, the sole disturbing note being the wails of the babies, for there were many infants on the sisters' side and they not infrequently sought to give expression to their still more primitive ideas by bursting forth in a vociferous chorus. They never disconcerted the preacher. Once or twice they stopped him, but he was accustomed to such interruptions and waited with resignation until the youngsters had been lulled or shaken into silence.

The congregation had supper together. This common meal is in commemoration of the Passover, and is marked by the serving of a stew of the paschal lamb. The company by this hour far exceeded the capacity of the tent, so when one party had supped, a second was admitted, and then a third, until all had been fed, not excepting the goodly number of non-sectarians who were present purely as sightseers. No effort was made, however, to clean the eating utensils for each new company. The latest comer sat down and took the plate, cup, knife, and fork as the last brother had left them. To have expected otherwise would have been a gross display of pride and a reflection on those who had gone before. But this was the only respect in which the first table was desirable, for there was no falling off in the supply of food, and the brothers and sisters were everywhere seeing that none went hungry.

The sun is settling on the mountains in the west when again the movement toward the barn begins. A few brethren have been working there this half-hour preparing it for the night's service. They have improvised tables by placing one bench upon another, stretching them in parallel rows with other seats at either side. A few of the younger men gather in one corner and begin singing lustily, and as their voices reach the orchard the little groups there melt away. Soon the seats are full and the preachers are in their places. The whole barn resounds with a German hymn. And as they sing the deacons are moving to and fro, stretching white cloths along the tables, arranging a few candlesticks there at wide intervals and swinging lanterns from the beams. The hymn is done. There is an expectant pause. An old brother from a dark corner wails the warning "Ho-oh-oh." And away they all go again :

Ho-oh-oh—relitchen is the thing,
I feel it in my soul.
Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
I feel it in my soul.

And as the last notes die away, we hear again the plaintive "Ho-oh-oh." Then silence.

The bishop rises. There is a suppressed shuffling as the brothers turn sideways on the benches to face him. He reads the

thirteenth chapter of St. John and discourses on it, dwelling on the lesson of humility taught there in the lowly service of feet-washing. It is nearly dark when he finishes, and one after another the candles are lighted, and now the lanterns are flickering from the beams overhead.

At one side, at the long tables, sit the sisters, their white prayer-coverings showing full against the general gloom, their mild, serious faces turned toward the preachers, and on every hand hang their black bonnets—sombre draperies added to the sombre scene. At the other side are the brethren, long-bearded, long-haired men with solemn faces, and along every low-lying beam stretch row on row of great hats, their crowns rising like a series of monuments to the doctrine of humility. On the platform are the preachers—a line of them—most of them old and white. The few flickering lights throw strange shadows everywhere, and now and then bring into relief the black forms of the unregenerate in the half-filled mows at either end. From the stables below come the sound of cattle stirring restlessly in their straw bedding, the half-suppressed bleat of a lamb, the cluck of a nervous hen. Back of it all, a pushing, vulgar mass, crowding at the wide doors, stares

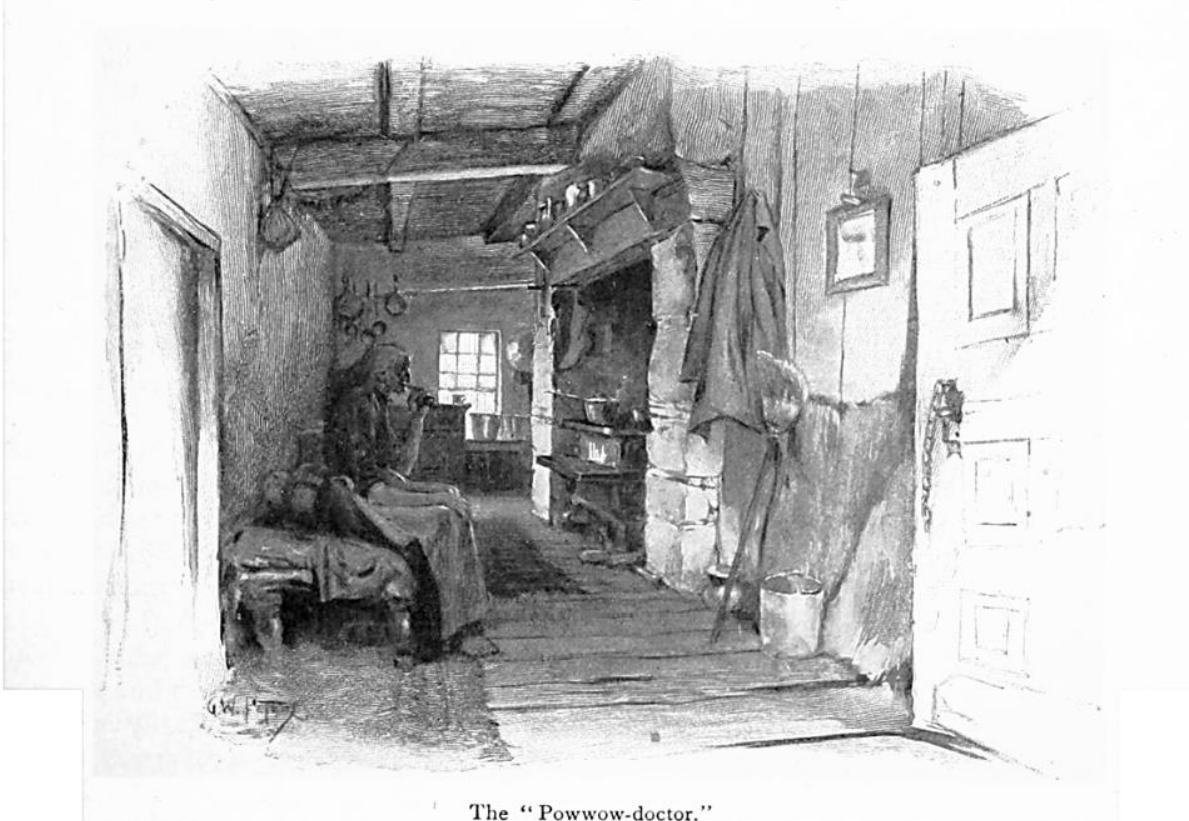
in at the company—the sightseers from the neighboring villages, arrayed in bonnets gay with paper flowers of every hue, bright dresses, or the terrible productions of the “fashionable tailor” or the “gents’ furnisher” of the country town.

A second preacher is on his feet expounding the doctrine of humility. He protests against the tendency of some of the sisters to relax a little in their strictness as to dress, as is evidenced here and there by a light blue gown. He beseeches them to keep apart from the world, and to shun the ways of the unregenerate.

“Let the young brethren be as the old brethren!” he cries. “Let the young sisters be as the old sisters!”

He, simple man, looks over the heads of his co-worshippers at the world as it stands there on the barn-bridge gaping at him, and the world seems a dreadful thing. Little wonder! As between his people, with their unconscious art, and the unregenerate without, our sympathies are with the brethren.

The preacher is closing. Now we hear a hushed clatter as brother after brother and sister after sister remove their shoes. The sermon is over. The congregation sit with backs to the tables, and great pans of water are carried down the aisles. Aprons are brought, and the bishop and



The “Powwow-doctor.”

the preacher at his side gird themselves and wash the feet of the two brothers next them. It is quickly done, and when he has dried his brother's feet with the apron, the bishop takes his right hand and leans down and gives him the kiss of peace. Then he hands him the apron and the pan. Down the aisles they go, two at a time, each pair performing the lowly service for the brothers next them and giving them the kiss as the ablutions are completed. So it is on the sisters' side. And during the odd rite the company sings.

The pedilavium done, the people kneel in prayer, and when they rise again they remain standing. The bishop turns slowly, takes the right hand of the preacher next him, and they kiss. It is the holy kiss, given as an emblem of love and charity, and it passes from one to another, slowly and solemnly, up the table on one side and down on the other, until the last brother has received it. He kisses his wife, and the gap between the sexes is bridged, and one after another the sisters receive it.

The communion service follows, and the congregation receive the emblems standing. On the brothers' side the strips of unleavened bread are passed from hand to hand, every man, as he gives it to his neighbor, saying, "Beloved brother, this bread which we break is the body of Christ." On the other side an elder goes from sister to sister breaking the bread. This difference has its foundation in the belief that as the women had no part in the breaking of Christ's body, neither should they break the emblem. So it is with the cup, the brethren passing it from hand to hand and the sisters taking it from the elder.

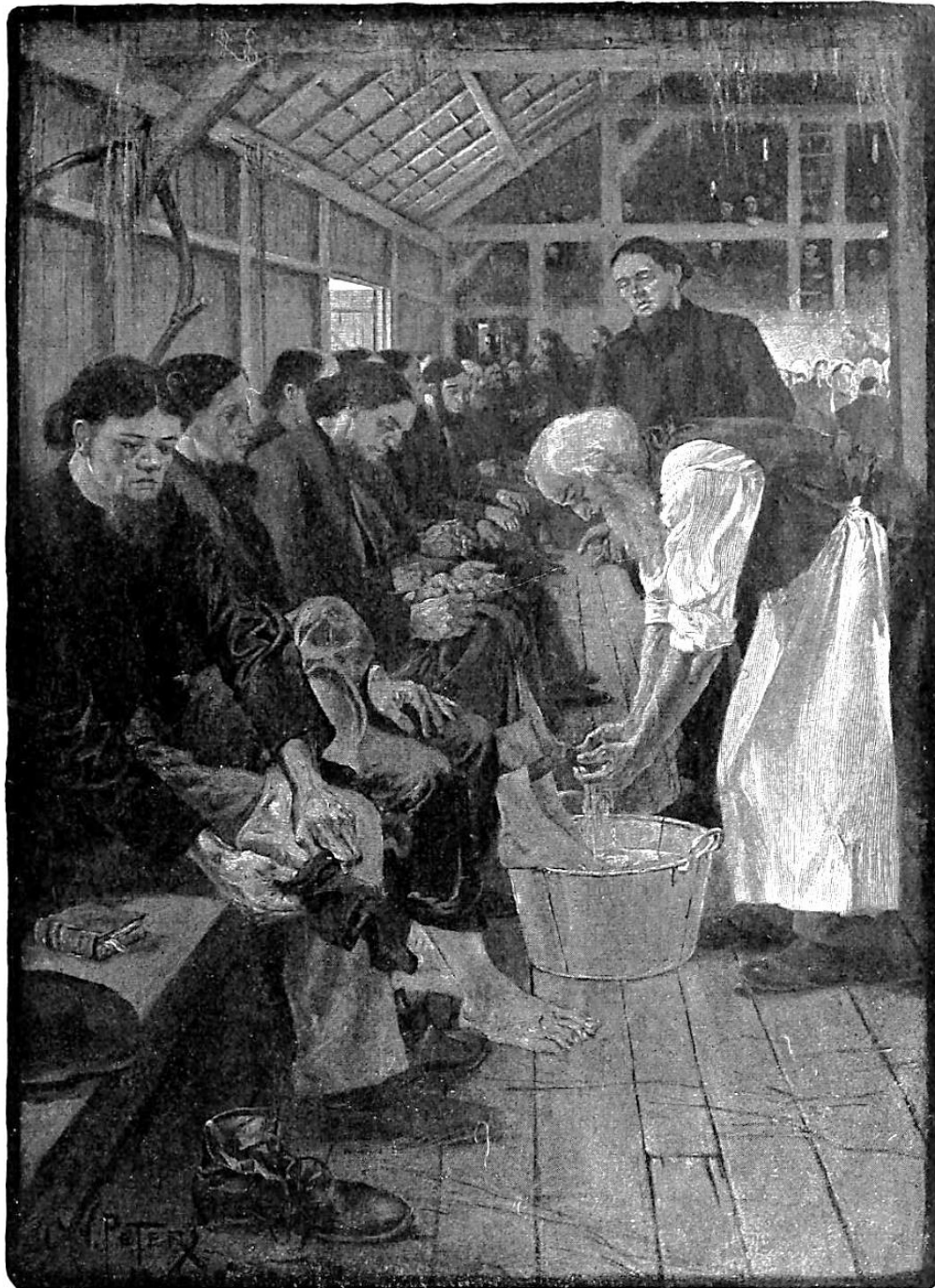
With the singing of a hymn the love-feast is over, but though the company separate to-night, they will meet again in the morning to pass another half-day in much singing and preaching and praying. Provision has been made to lodge them in the neighboring houses and barns, so it will be noon before the rockaways are on the road again, homeward bound.

In its details the ceremony of the love-feast differs much among the various sects. Most of the Dunkers have meeting-houses designed with special provision for the rite, with a great kitchen and dining-hall in the basement and an attic equipped as

sleeping quarters. Many of them make the supper still more closely a part of the evening service. Tables are set in the main hall of the meeting-house, and after the pedilavium the feast is held, the congregation having simply to put on their shoes and to wheel about on the benches. The chief dish, of course, is the lamb-stew, which is served in great bowls, four brethren usually eating from a common vessel.

The love-feast in its perfection must have been that observed at Ephrata, that strangest of monastic communities which flourished in the eighteenth century in Lancaster County, under the leadership of Conrad Beissel. When we read of that monastery and of its predecessor in the ridge on the outskirts of Germantown, much in the character and customs of our sectarians of to-day becomes clearer. When we know of the mystic midnight rites on the Wissahickon and the Coca-llico, we will not wonder at the quaint superstitions that cling to the pious descendants of the pious brethren of that day, for their influence was widespread among the people of their race and religion. It was on the ridge overlooking the Wissahickon that the "Society of the Woman of the Wilderness" (Revelation xii. 14-17) flourished in the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth century. This company of German Pietists had come hither in 1694, and under the leadership of the mystic and scholar, Johannes Kelpius, established themselves in the wilderness to await the millennium. They continued here for many years, a band of forty mystics, living in a log house forty feet square, passing their days in charitable labors among their fellow-countrymen, in meditation and services of devotion, and in mysterious rites and incantations by which they hoped to obtain theosophical light. From a watch-tower on the roof, a brother nightly scanned the heavens with a telescope for a harbinger of the Bridegroom's coming, that their lamps might be trimmed and burning.

Conrad Beissel, a pious journeyman baker, arrived in Germantown in 1720, expecting to find there an ideally spiritual community where he, too, could spend his days in devotion. He found that



Each pair performing the lowly service for the brothers next them.—Page 522.

Kelpius was dead ; the nightly vigil on the watch-tower had been abandoned, and the "Contented of the God-loving Soul," as the hermits called themselves, were scattered. Beissel had once in his wanderings stayed with the old Schwarzenau congregation, and now in his disappointment he sought out his former friends and indentured himself to Peter Becker to learn the weaver's trade. At the expiration of his service he removed to an anchorite's hut in the Conestoga valley, and endeavored, by ceaseless teaching and preaching, to revive the dying spirit of

religion among his countrymen. He soon became a power among them, and his fame as a pious man spread through the country. Then Becker came into the valley with a party of Dunker revivalists, and Beissel was baptized by his former master in the Pequa. He organized a Dunker congregation in Conestoga, but he and his followers soon split from the Germantown brethren on the question of observing the Sabbath on the first or seventh day. Beissel adhered to the Mosaic law, and a breach was formed that was never closed. The Sabbatarian

congregation grew in strength, but dissensions came, together with much persecution from without, and finally, in 1732, the weary teacher betook himself once more to the wilderness. He had hoped to lead a hermit's life on the banks of the Cocalico Creek, but one after another, brother after brother and sister after sister, followed him into seclusion until, in a few years, there had gathered under his rule one of the strangest monastic communities in history.

To-day a few tottering buildings mark the spot where the Solitary Brethren and the Sisters lived so long their hard lives of labor and prayer. The Sister House and its Saal, or prayer-hall, the Brother House, and a few cabins still stand. Only a handful remain of those who follow the lines laid down by the master spirit, Father Friesdam, as Beissel was called by his people. But Ephrata, until the close of the eighteenth century, was a great centre of religious teaching, and its influences have been lasting on a large body of Pennsylvania Germans.

It seems but a step from our barn-service to-day to those night gatherings in the old prayer-hall at the monastery, with the white-robed brotherhood on the platform at one end; the white-hooded, white-gowned sisters in their secluded gallery, the oddly garbed men and women of the secular congregation on the main floor, and at the preacher's table the mystic Beissel. But the pious folk at our barn-service are liberal as compared with the brothers and sisters of Ephrata. Their day of preaching and praying in the spring and autumn, long ordeal though it may seem, is as nothing to the ceaseless round of devotion in Father Friesdam's community, the long services of song and teaching, the midnight vigil awaiting the Bridegroom's coming, the pilgrimages afoot to awaken the lagging brethren far and near. And it was not on these duties alone that the Ephrata brother filled his life, for oddly mixed with the strict religious regimen were the weird ceremonies of the Zionitic Brotherhood, who studied deeply the mysterious philosophy of the Rosicrucians, and sought to attain spiritual regeneration by mystic rites which are said to have had their origin in the earliest ages.

The hermits of the Wissahickon were

skilled in the casting of horoscopes, and in the preparation of charms by occult ceremonies to drive away misfortune and disease. Superstition was rife among the Germans in Ephrata's time, and the rites of the Solitary Brethren could not have lessened its hold on the simple people. We do not wonder, then, to find in our valleys to-day strange charms to drive away disease, incantations to lull into helplessness the snake, and even the boisterous bee; lucky days, unlucky days, omens of good and evil, and odd beliefs almost innumerable. For in many a farmhouse we find the Bible and the almanac side by side, the first a guide to good living, the last to good husbandry. To many the almanac is as much of a mystery as the Bible, and they follow it as blindly. They know nothing of the fixed stars, the planets and their movements, which play so important a part in their gardening. The "signs of the moon" are found by studying the almanac, not the heavens. When she wants to plant cucumbers under the influence of The Twins, that they may bear abundantly, the farmer's wife does not sit up at night to find the moon's position in the Zodiac. Her little pamphlet will give her the important information. Indeed, the signs of the Zodiac were better called the signs of the almanac.

There is a bit of odd reasoning in the selection of these signs. For example, anything planted when the moon is in Pisces, the fish, will be well watered; beet-seed put in the ground when the moon is in Cancer, the crab, will run to sprouts; that which is to grow great and strong should be planted under Leo's influence; a calf weaned in this same sign is likely to become too valiant a beast, so for self-protection the farmer should trust him to the care of Pisces, and he will grow up spiritless.

The sign of the "Posey Woman" is in some sections a popular name for Virgo, and when the moon is in this part of the heavens it is best to plant flowers, for under the Virgin's guardian care they will bloom abundantly. When the horns of the moon point downward one should plant such things as are to obtain their greatest growth beneath the surface, as the onion, the potato, and the beet, for under the contrary conditions they are likely to

run to tops. Even the fence-post comes under the influence of the heavens, and stands firm and straight when put in the ground when the moon's horns are turned earthward, and the shingle should be nailed under the same conditions, else it will curl upward. So we can go through the almost innumerable little duties of the farm and find for each an odd superstition. Many of these have come down from the remotest ages in German history; some bear the stamp of pagan times; others seem outgrowths of the later mystic movement in Germany and the provinces on this side the sea.

The practice of "powwowing," or driving away disease by incantation, is said to have been in vogue for ages among the German people. And in our valleys to-day the "powwow-doctors" still repeat over many bedsides the mysterious formulas which have been handed down from generation to generation. Old women seem generally to be "blessed with the gift," and marvellous is the faith in their powers. A general condition of success is that they charge nothing for their services. This is laudable, indeed, but it is usually counterbalanced by the fact that they board for days at a time in the patient's house while they mutter their incantations over him. But the school is slowly driving the "powwow-doctor" farther and farther into the woods. Education is bringing to simple minds doubts as to their powers, and it is not unusual to see them mumbling their charmed words over limbs bandaged by modern surgery.

Even the apple-butter, Pennsylvania's great staple, is influenced by the movements of the heavenly bodies, for we must pick our apples when "the moon is wet," when its horns are turned up so the old Indian can hang a bucket on them. The apples will be juicy then, and we shall get

a good barrel of cider from every twelve bushels. Every drop counts during a boiling, for we are going to boast to our neighbors about how much our apples yield. That is an important topic of conversation. It is a point on which comparisons can be made as well as on the weight of hogs at butchering-time.

These "b'ilin's" are great occasions in our valley. When old Joe Dimple and his missus have fixed their date, the neighbors know it. It would be almost a breach of etiquette for any other person within a mile to choose the same day. But the Dimples doubly preempt it by borrowing all the cop-

per kettles in the neighborhood. The Dimples "make" on Tuesday; they "boil" on Wednesday. It is announced, and those two days are given to the Dimples. The first is passed by the men of the family gathering the apples and making cider; the women "schnitz." A great social occasion is a "schnitzin'," when the sisters sit through a whole afternoon paring apples and gossiping, until they have filled several large tubs with the white fruit ready for the boiling.

The Dimples are up early next day. They are out early every morning, and the sun generally finds them through breakfast when he appears on the scene. But when



The Kiss of Peace.

one is going to boil, an extra good start is needed. Two great copper kettles full of cider are rigged over a fire behind the summer kitchen, and the tedious operation of "boiling down" is begun. By and by the neighbors begin dropping in again. There is Mrs. Andy Hooker from up the pike, who has come to help finish the "schnitz-in'," and has brought her man along to lend a hand at the stirrer; there is Dumble's wife's cousin and her aunt from over

members that he has some chores to do at the barn, and Mrs. Andy Hooker's man finds himself attached to the stirrer, with the women ever at hand to see that he never lags. Thicker and thicker and blacker and blacker turns the butter. The sun is low when the last apples disappear into the sticky, bubbling, steaming mass, but there are hours yet of stirring. It is long work, this boiling.

Darkness comes. Often when driving



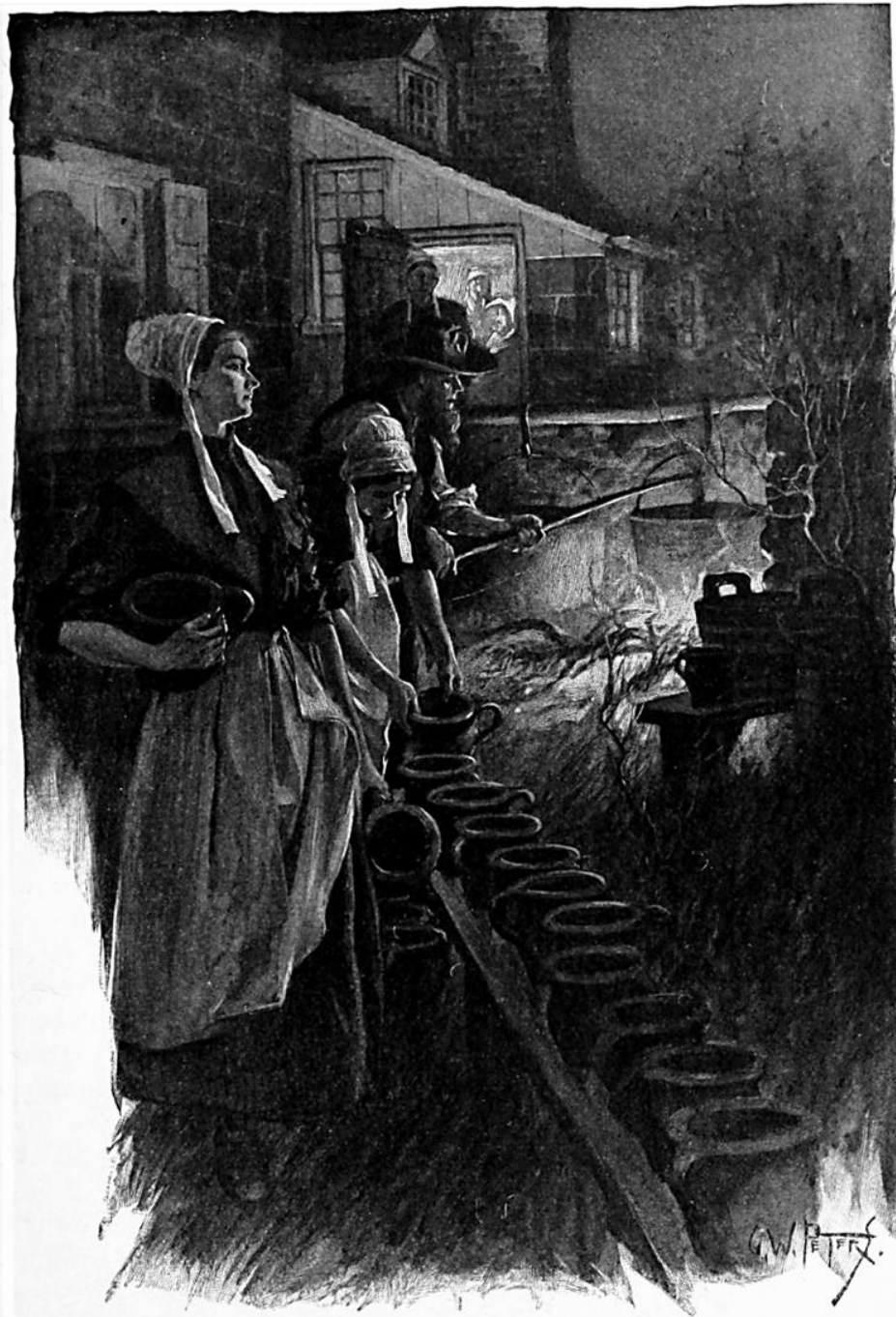
The Sister House and its Saal, or Prayer-hall, and the Brother House.

the ridge, and a parcel of sisters from the adjoining places and the village. Brother Matthias Zook, who rents out his farm for the half and so has his whole time to himself, drops in to get a drink of cider, stays to dinner, and lingers on till the stirring begins. Then he disappears.

All morning long and well into the afternoon the cider boils until where there were three barrels now there is one big copper kettle full. The momentous hour has arrived when the "schnitz" must be tumbled in, bucketful by bucketful, and stirred into the steaming juice. It is a dreadful operation, this stirring, for to grasp the long handle that guides the wooden paddle about the kettle is like seizing an electric wire. Much as it hurts, you can't let go. The fire may blaze until you are blistering; though arms ache and legs totter, the stirrer must be kept moving, for let it rest one moment and the kettle will burn. And a good copper kettle is worth twenty dollars! So Dumble re-

through our valley on autumn nights we burst upon these scenes that for the moment recall the weird sisters in "Macbeth." About the great caldron, in the glare of the blazing logs, we see the hooded sisters, moving to and fro, into the light and out again. But what might seem the incantations of the witches over the hell-broth is really a hurried test of its thickness. The figure that sweeps from the darkness into the fire-lit circle with hands outstretched is not about to toss into the kettle the "eye of newt" or the "toe of frog." It is Mrs. Andy Hooker and her contribution to the butter, a half pound of cinnamon. She disappears again. Now comes the second witch, swinging across the glowing cavern, in the person of Mrs. Dumble, who waddles up to the caldron and flings into it not the "nose of a Turk" nor "a Tartar's lips," but a bucketful of sugar.

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and caldron bubble.



These "b'ilins" are great occasions in our valley.—Page 525.

We doubt if "all" are repeating the weird incantation, but in the fat, dim outline against the black night we can see one who possibly feels it. This is Mrs. Andy Hooker's man at the end of the stirrer. It is late before he is freed from that dreadful burden, for they make the gruel "thick and slab," black and fragrant, all the virtues of the orchard boiled down into a few stone crocks.

The brethren and the sisters have few social gatherings, so the apple-butter boiling, the barn-raising, or the quilting is an occasion of importance. It is upon their

religious festivals and the meeting-house that they depend largely for their broader intercourse, for they usually shun the great county gatherings, the dances and the picnics, in conformity with their rule of keeping apart from the world. That they will be able to continue thus seems doubtful. Here and there in the meeting-houses a light blue calico dress beneath a gray bonnet, or a high, shining celluloid collar showing above a Dunker coat gives a hint that the world is closing in on them. It is pleasant, however, to see how tenaciously they do cling to their old customs.

Some of the Mennonites have drifted far from the rules of their fathers in the matter of conformity with the world, but they retain their quaint church discipline. For example, all the branches still choose their ministers by lot. The Dunkers select theirs by a general vote, but the Mennonite fulfils the law as he can best interpret it (Acts i. 23-26). When a preacher is to be chosen the members of the congregation suggest those whom they wish to see ordained. The men thus named are called at a fixed time before the bishop and the other preachers. The bishop places in front of them a number of books in one of which is a slip of paper. The brother who draws that book is at once ordained.

The lot falls in strange places sometimes. They get some odd preachers that way, but none who are ever likely to split the church in a controversy over higher criticism.

"There are no mysteries in the Bible," I heard a venerable bishop say to his people one day last summer. He leaned over the rough table that served him as a pulpit and added, with greater emphasis, "God never made no mysteries." There was a pause, as he straightened up, and his thoughts seemed to wander far away, for he was looking at the ceiling. He came back again, though, and in the tone of one thoroughly convinced of the truth of what

he was saying, he declared: "But, brethren, there are some tight p'int's."

Tight p'int's? Brother, avoid them! Already we see, worming its way with your simple brain, the bacillus of higher criticism. Crush it. For in the "tight p'int" is the ruthless enemy of the broad-brimmed hat and the scoop bonnet; the reviler of the almanac; the boon companion of the worldly button; the careless artist who will whiten over the cerulean gates; the talented musician who will sneer out of your hymn-books the old buckwheat note, with its memories of harmonious discord. And we, even the unregenerate of the valley, who sing our songs of praise to the melodeon's accompaniment and listen to the discourses of a hireling ministry—even we should miss the Sunday procession across the ridges. The old Dunker sleigh, with its high back, or the rockaway, with its mud-coated curtains and the monstrous fat horse, the blue gate and the long, low meeting-house are as much a part of our landscape as the lone pine in the clearing and the gap in the mountain, where we can look into the home of the rattler and the bear.

Tight p'int's? Friend, watch where you wander! For we who have known you would cry with the preacher at the love-feast, "Let the young brethren be as the old brethren, and the young sisters as the old sisters."



A Dunker Girl in the Fields.

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